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SUBJECT: KHARTOUM TALK ABOUT UN REHATTING

Classified By: CHARGE D'AFFAIRES CAMERON HUME; REASON: 1.4(B) AND (D)

¶1. (C) On August 13 CDA Hume met at his request with SPLM parliamentary chief Yassir Arman to discuss Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) implementation and transition from AU to UN forces in Darfur. Hume reiterated USG readiness to work with the SPLM to bring together Minni Minawi, Abdul Wahid, and SLM dissident Abdul Shafi with the goal of widening support for the DPA. Hume told Arman that he had met with a number of NCP officials over the past ten days in an effort to engage them on the subject of UN rehatting. Although President Bashir repeated his flat rejection of UN forces, others were eager to know what was being negotiated among UNSC members, and some insisted that the Government of Sudan might/might agree to UN rehatting despite Bashir,s public statements.

¶2. (C) Arman said he had been in contact with Abdul Wahid and Abdul Shafi in Asmara. He said Abdul Wahid was held in isolated conditions, accompanied only by a Darfurian exile from Canada who was giving bad advice on U.S. policy. Abdul Wahid, in Arman,s view, was indecisive and unable to shift his position tactically, and for this reason he had gradually lost support. Arman said Abdul Shafi was reasonable and might be convinced to support the DPA, but he needed to get away from Eritrea to have freedom of action. Contacts were ongoing to pursue the idea of a trip by First Vice President Salva Kiir to Eritrea with the goal of getting both Fur leaders out of Eritrea.

¶3. (C) Arman affirmed that political circles in Khartoum were actively discussing how to shift the Sudanese government,s position to accept UN rehatting. According to Arman, two months ago presidential advisers Nafie Ali Nafie and Magzoub al Khalifa convinced President Bashir it was feasible to reject UN rehatting and to assert national responsibility for security in Darfur. They had done so as part of an effort to weaken the position of VP Ali Osman Taha, who was associated with a more international approach. Since then Taha had withdrawn from the issue, convinced that the more unilateral approach would eventually fail. As evidence that the internal debate was progressing, Arman cited a statement by presidential adviser Abdalla Ali Masar in a press interview that a mandate under Chapter VI should be acceptable.

¶4. (C) Arman described the decision by the NCP and SPLM to set up a joint committee on national security. On the NCP side members would include VP Taha, Majzoub al Khalifa, Nafie Ali Nafie, NISS Director Salah Gosh and several others; on the SPLM side members would include FVP Kiir, SPLM Secretary General Pagun Amum, Minister of Cabinet Affairs Deng Alor, Arman, and several others. The committee was set to meet over the next two days, and UN rehatting was one of the issues on the table.

¶5. (C) Arman insisted that there was a real possibility that, despite President Bashir,s public statements, the government could be brought around. He said all were aware that the USG would have a crucial role to play, initially to explain that

UN rehatting was essential to DPA implementation, but perhaps more importantly to make it palatable for Bashir to shift from a position that he had taken so publicly.

16. (C) In a brief conversation August 12 with CDA Hume, SLM leader Minni Minawi said he was aware that the issue of UN rehatting was being discussed by government committees and he intended to weigh in to urge a positive decision. Minnawi commented that he knew the Sudanese Armed Forces could not pacify Darfur, and the unilateral plan would fail. In an August 13 conversation, UN chief political adviser Jack Christofides told Hume that, while UN HQ would like robust language in the mandate, as a practical matter the phrases &to take necessary action8 and &to use all necessary means8 would in the field be interpreted by UN peacekeepers to mean the same thing. He suggested the right way forward would be to stick to a less complicated mandate, with the emphasis on DPA implementation.
HUME